

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 03621 232326Z
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 SAB-02 CIAE-00
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 IO-13 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-07
SOE-02 DOE-15 CEQ-01 /152 W
-----093832 232337Z /70

P 232218Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7156
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
DA WASHDC
CNO WASHDC
PANCANAL
USSOUTHCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 03621

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MUNC, OCLR, UK, US, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: BRITISH NPW TRANSIT OF PANAMA CANAL

REF: STATE 125914

1. EMBOFF HAS DISCUSSED THE PLANNED TRANSIT WITH THE
PANAMA CANAL COMPANY, WITH THE U.S. NAVAL STATION
COMMANDER, AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR. THE BRITISH
AMBASSADOR HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY OF THE FOLLOWING:

A. THERE HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO PUBLICITY ABOUT
THIS VISIT, PARTICULARLY ABOUT THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE
OF A NPW; NONE IS INTENDED UNTIL THE VISIT IS OVER.

B. HE HAS INVITED GENERAL TORRIJOS TO LUNCH ABOARD
ONE OF THE VESSELS, AND THE INVITATION HAS BEEN
ACCEPTED. NO MENTION HAS BEEN MADE TO TORRIJOS
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 03621 232326Z

ABOUT ANY OTHER TENTATIVE PLANS RELATED TO THE VISIT.

C. HE AND GENERAL TORRIJOS AGREED THAT GENERAL
MCAULIFFE AND GOVERNOR PARFITT SHOULD BE INCLUDED
IN THE INVITATION TO LUNCH. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR
QUOTED TORRIJOS AS SAYING, "WE MUST GET CLOSER TO
THE AMERICANS."

\$. HE HAS DISCUSSED THE TRANSIT AT LENGTH WITH GOVERNOR PARFITT AND THE PANAMA CANAL COMPANY MARINE DIRECTOR.

E. NOTHING WILL BE DONE ON THIS MATTER WITHOUT FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE USG.

2. AS OF MAY 22, A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE CALLS FOR THE TRANSIT ON JULY 9 OF 8 OR 9 VESSELS, BEGINNING AT ABOUT 0630 AND TERMINATING IN MID-TO LATE AFTERNOON THE SAME DAY. THE PLAN (PARA 2 REFTTEL) INVOLVING DEBARKATION FROM THE SUBMARINE WHILE IT IS IN MIRAFLORES LOCKS HAS BEEN SCRUBBED DUE TO SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS. SEVERAL OTHER POSSIBLE SCENARIOS ARE UNDER CONSIDERATION. AS REPORTED FROM ALL SIDES, THE LOGISTICS OF VIP TRANSFERS TO AND FROM A SUBMARINE ARE EXTREMELY COMPLICATED, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BOTH THE VESSEL ITSELF AND THE VIPS INVOLVED. A FINAL DECISION ON A SCENARIO IS STILL PENDING. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS DISCUSSED THE TRANSIT WITH THE US NAVAL STATION COMMANDER, AS WELL AS WITH GOVERNOR PARFITT AND THE MARINE DIRECTOR.

3. THE CONSENSUS HERE IS THAT, ALTHOUGH THE BRITISH CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 03621 232326Z

AMBASSADOR INDICATES THAT THE UK INTENDS TO TREAT THE TRANSIT AS A NORMAL ONE, THE VERY FACT THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS IS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE EVENT WILL CALL ATTENTION TO IT. EVEN IF IT IS NOT ADVERTISED, THE PRESENCE OF A NPW PROBABLY WILL BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, HOWEVER, NUMEROUS U.S. NPWS HAVE TRANSITED THE CANAL WITHOUT INCIDENT. THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS, OF COURSE, THAT SOME OPPOSITIONIST MAY SEIZE ON THE EVENT AND GENERAL TORRIJOS' PARTICIPATION IN IT AS A MEANS OF CRITICIZING TORRIJOS, BUT HIS IS UNLIKELY.

4. CONCERNING PROTOCOL (PARA 4 REFTTEL), THE FACT THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS AGREES TO INVITING GENERAL MCAULIFFE AND GOVERNOR PARFITT TO THE LUNCHEON BEING PLANNED ALLEVIATES ANY PROBLEM AS FAR AS THE CANAL ZONE IS CONCERNED. AMBASSADOR JORDEN HAS ALSO BEEN INVITED TO THE LUNCHEON. ACCORDING TO PANCANAL, THE GOVERNOR WOULD WANT TO BE PRESENT AT ANY ACTIVITIES INVOLVING GENERAL TORRIJOS IN THE ZONE. JORDEN

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Message Attributes

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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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ISecure: 1
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TAGS: MNUC, OCLR, UK, US, PN, PQ
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